TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS AND MINORITY STUDENTS' PLACEMENT IN DEKALB COUNTY'S GIFTED PROGRAMS

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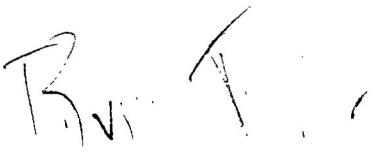

ABSTRACT

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS AND MINORITY STUDENTS' PLACEMENT IN DEKALB COUNTY'S GIFTED PROGRAMS

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This study examined teachers' perceptions of giftedness and minority students' placement in metropolitan DeKalb County Schools. The study was based on the premise that teachers' referrals relate to perceptions of giftedness. Creativity, motivation, and brightness characteristics were identified as indicators of giftedness.

Moderator variables included teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. A survey was developed to gather data for this research

investigation and the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

The study found that teachers at the elementary school level reported a statistically significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. Teachers' knowledge of gifted characteristics was equally balanced as it related to the ethnic composition of the school and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. The Pearson correlation and ANOVA was used to establish the validity for both inventories as well as to assess the seven hypotheses and seven research questions posed.

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First, to God, for providing the dream with the dreamer. To my parents, Cora and Byron Allen, for choosing, guiding, and loving me. To Dr. Eugene and Pat Walker, Sr. for nurturing my spirit with peace and joy. Finally, to my mentor, Dr. William Denton, for providing a light with his wisdom and patience. I love you ALL!

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Chapter One

Introduction

One of the intractable and persistent problems in the area of gifted education has been the difficulty of ensuring that all qualified children have the opportunity to participate in the school district's gifted programs. The underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs appeared to be systematic. Marquardi & Karnes (1994) indicated that in the state of Georgia there were 43 court suits filed in 1992 by minority parents concerning the underrepresentation of minority children in Georgia's gifted programs. The plaintiffs' arguments concerned the lack of minority students in gifted programs and the identification procedures used by the state of Georgia (Marquardi & Karnes, 1994).

Furthermore, Georgia's gifted programs were accused of operating in a discriminatory manner and of using solely traditional intelligence assessments to identify potential giftedness (Tettegah, 1996; Karnes & Whorton, 1991). As a result, the complaints were brought to the attention of the Office of Civil Rights, since the issue of the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs primarily affected Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Ford & Thomas, 1997). However, given the need for a broader view of the definition of giftedness, research suggested that it was necessary to use multiple criteria or data from a variety of sources in order to identify the myriad ways in which children's gifts could be expressed for gifted identification (Wood & Achey, 1990).

According to the National Commission for Excellence in Education's (1993) study, black students represented 16 percent of the school population, but only 8 percent of gifted students; Hispanic Americans represented 11 percent of the school population, but only 4.7 percent of gifted students; and Native Americans represented 1 percent of the school population, but only .3 percent of gifted students. In the state of Georgia, white students represented 82 percent of the gifted students; black students represented 11 percent of the gifted students; Hispanic American students represented .008 percent of the gifted students; native American students represented .001 percent of the gifted students; Asian American students represented .04 percent of the gifted students; and other multi-racial students represented .009 percent of the gifted students. However, in the DeKalb County Schools, black students represented 75 percent of the school population, but 43 percent of the gifted students. White students represented 15 percent of the school population, but 45 percent of the gifted students. The multi-racial students represented 10 percent of the school population, but .07 percent of the gifted students (Krisel, 1999).

Ford (1997) stated that the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs was affected by teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the narrow identification process. In studies focusing on teachers' perceptions of giftedness and minority students' placement in gifted programs, researchers have found that ethnic minority students were least likely to participate in programs for gifted students (Ford, 1995; Ford & Harris, 1991; Grantham, 1997). The researchers noted that these gifted minority students could not reach their full potential when they were not

participating in gifted programs and when their gifts and talents remained unacknowledged or under-developed by the schools' personnel. As a result, of the 20 percent of school dropouts, over 50 percent of these dropouts were poor gifted black students (Ford, 1997).

In addition, national studies have noted that more than 50 percent of minority gifted students had been identified as underachievers (Ford, 1998). A Nation at Risk National Commission on Excellence (1993) reported that much of the data regarding the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs indicated that those students were characterized by such attributes as disorganization, lack of concentration, perfectionism, low self-esteem, unwillingness to conform, anxiety, and vulnerability to peer pressure. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Ford (1994) it was contended that the underachievement among minorities must also be investigated in relation to social forces such as discrimination, prejudice, and socioeconomic status that may decrease motivation and academic achievement.

The narrow definition of giftedness, which for a long time was limited to considering only intelligence, academic aptitude, and academic achievement, led Georgia to broaden its definition of giftedness and include multiple identification processes. Moreover, due to the copious underrepresentation of minorities in Georgia's gifted programs, many national researchers and practitioners commented on the intractable construct in the identification process of giftedness. These comments have led to the identification of an estimated 10,000 potentially gifted minorities in Georgia

(Nelson, 1996). Georgia's crusade in the identification of the underrepresented minority population in gifted programs began in 1991. The National Research Center for the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) selected six Georgia school districts to participate in the Multiple Criteria Identification of Gifted Students from Economically Disadvantaged and Limited English Proficiency Populations project.

Two of Georgia's school districts, Atlanta Public Schools and Gwinnett, received Javits grants targeted towards identifying the underrepresented gifted minority population. The Javits grants were provided to help educators accurately nominate children from various cultural and economic backgrounds who demonstrated the traits, aptitudes, and behaviors associated with giftedness (Coleman & Gallagher, 1994). Through the NRC/GT project and the Javits grants, Georgia was hoping to reverse the historical underrepressentation of minorities in gifted programs. At that point, Georgia realized that the groups being underrepresented in gifted programs included racial and ethnic minority groups, economically disadvantaged students, and those with limited English proficiency. Georgia sought to adopt a multiple-criteria instrument that would include creativity and motivation.

In January 1994, the Georgia Association for Gifted Children and Javits grants administrators addressed the equity issues in the identification of potentially gifted minority students. Two months later, the legislators passed a bill requiring the use of multiple-criteria in identifying gifted students in the state of Georgia. Afterwards, the Department of Education required gifted programs to begin implementing two-day training sessions at each of the state's 16 Regional Education Services Agencies. The

governor signed Bill HB 1768 into law which directed gifted teachers, administrators, and psychologists throughout the state to ensure that a multiple-criteria instrument was used to identify gifted traits. From June 1994 to February 1995, teachers and administrators worked to translate the new law into manageable procedures, while incorporating recent research on the use of a combination of standardized tests, observations, and performance data to identify gifted students.

By January 1997, all of the state's agencies had developed their local administrative plans and had begun to identify children by using the new rule. The institution of the new rule then led to an equally important issue relating to the identification of giftedness among minority students, teachers' nominations. According to notes made by Ford (1996), teachers' nominations of potentially gifted minorities were contingent on teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the identification practices they used to place students in gifted programs.

However, many teachers believed that the rule would lower the eligibility levels and gifted programs' standards (Krisel, 1999). Some educators, according to Krisel (1999), were not receptive to the prospect of giving up the security of mental ability tests and rigid cut-off scores. Krisel stated that many educators also began to question the procedural details of the identification rule. As a result, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) ensured that the goal of instituting a functional multiple-criteria rule would not be dismissed. The OCR required school districts to maintain records of all recommendations of students to gifted programs and of all notifications to parents regarding their child's status. Finally, the Georgia State Board of Education adopted the

multiple-criteria rule, which stated that all children nominated for possible gifted program placement would be assessed in the areas of mental ability, academic achievement, and Renzulli's checklist for creativity and motivation. The multiple-criteria rule used a variety of standardized tests, observational and performance measurements (Krisel, 1999). Although a number of researchers, Tettegah (1996) & Frasier (1996); and Ford & Thomas (1997), confirmed that the most prevalent method of identifying gifted minorities in the United States involved using teachers' recommendations.

These researchers agreed that teachers may not be the most reliable sources for identifying potentially gifted minority students, particularly if those students were from culturally or racially diverse groups (Patton, 1992; Ford, 1995).

As far back as Pegnato & Birch (1959) and followed by Atkinson & Thompson (1992), studies have concluded that teachers not only failed to nominate over 50 percent of the gifted minority students in their schools, but they also identified many average students as gifted. In conjunction with these studies, Jacobs (1971) and Frasier (1994) indicated that teachers were only able to identify 10 percent of the minority students who scored high on individual intelligence tests. Researchers Patton (1992); Van Tassel-Baska (1984); Ford & Thomas (1997) reported that almost 38 percent of the teachers in their study samples failed to identify gifted minority students in their third and fourth grade classrooms. This was an important factor, considering that these are the grades in which many gifted programs tend to begin servicing gifted students. Their studies also indicated that teachers tended to focus on such characteristics as good behavior, cooperation, answering correctly, punctuality, and neatness when

recommending individuals for gifted programs. According to Frasier & Passow (1995), teachers were likely to nominate the "well-behaved" model students to gifted programs rather than the truly gifted students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the placement of minorities in Georgia's gifted programs. Research was needed to identify how teachers' perceptions of giftedness influenced their ability to identify potentially gifted minorities whose racial or ethnic backgrounds differed from their own, as well as how, these perceptions affected teachers' nominations of minorities, as they related to the teachers' job role (gifted and regular), ethnicity, and years of teaching experience.

Whenever a single method was used to determine eligibility for admission to gifted programs, chances were increased that qualifying participants would be overlooked. Current research would help educators understand that giftedness is complex and takes on many forms and that there is a need for multiple-criteria to identify giftedness. These issues were relevant to the identification and placement of minority students within metropolitan gifted programs in Georgia. In addition, this study exposed how teachers' perceptions of giftedness and definitions of giftedness (that is, whether they emphasized mental intelligence, creativity, or motivation versus the "well-behaved" bright characteristics) differed as it related to teachers' such as job role (regular and gifted), ethnicity, and years of teaching experience.

The Background

The word "gifted" meant different things to different people and often caused confusion and miscommunication. Often "gifted" was used as a synonym for "genius" rather than to describe extraordinary potential gifted behavior in one of the many domains of gifted intelligences (Fisher, Frank, & Brower, 1998). On the other hand, Maker (1996) stated that giftedness is an asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that were qualitatively different from the norm. He further explained that asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of gifted students rendered them particularly vulnerable and required modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for gifted minority students to develop optimally (Ford, 1994).

According to Torrance (1984) and Renzulli (1983, 1994), giftedness was usually identified and measured by external expressions such as performance and achievement. However, Tolan observed that achievement could fluctuate depending on an individual's immediate situation or relationship with a particular teacher and the availability of courses that are sufficiently challenging and interesting to that individual student. He stated that even physical health could be a factor. Ford (1997) believed that all too often, giftedness was based on achievement, in the form of grades, awards, scholarships, position, wealth, career, or success. On the other hand, a study conducted by Renzulli (1994) concluded that giftedness did not depend on such variables. He explained that

whether or not giftedness found expression in the form of external achievement, the internal feeling of difference remained separate from the individual's external performance. Thus, the external expressions could alter or even be affected by a student's internal feelings. These were factors that may influence minority students' placement in gifted programs.

Nevertheless, the quest for equality in gifted education opportunities for minorities continued. Since the decision in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954), over 40 years ago, perhaps the most significant ruling in the history of the United States Supreme Court, blacks have been denied equality in the education system. In Brown, the court ruled that the "segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even through the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors that lack equality, not only deprived minorities of equal educational opportunities but also violated their rights to equal protection of laws, which is guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution" (Ford, 1995). Some 40 years after the Supreme Court's monumental ruling, the promise of Brown remains unfulfilled for gifted minority students. In fact, although earlier laws included definitions pertaining to giftedness, at present, only one major federal law, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act of 1988, acknowledged and supported the need to identify the underrepresented minority population (Ford, 1994, 1997; Grantham & Ford, 1998). Yet, Ford validated that this law fell short in mandating, creating and monitoring of special programs. States' laws on gifted and talented education ran the gamut (Gordon, 1996). Thirty-three states had some type of mandated ruling regarding the attention given to the underrepresented gifted minority students' identification process (Abel, 1994). However,

in 14 states there were no state level mandates in the identification process to identify the underrepresented gifted minority students (Coleman & Gallagher, 1994; Frasier, 1996). Although the National Defense Education Act (1958), which was enacted as a response to Sputnik, supported the need for gifted programs, it did not specifically address gifted programs' identification process with its emphasis on mathematics, the sciences, and foreign languages. However, it served in many ways as the precursor for today's gifted programs. This era made gifted students the primary benefactors of major curricular reform (Cox et al., 1985; Gallagher, 1988; Goodlad, 1964; Ford, 1994).

Georgia's gifted programs' plan was to provide equal access to all gifted students and to give them the opportunity to realize their fullest potential. The plan's intent, according to (Nelson, 1996), was to ensure that all appropriate persons and agencies within the state would be apprised of the right of gifted students to have access to equal educational opportunities. The state's responsibility was to describe activities that could be undertaken by decision makers and to disseminate multilingual copies of the section of the law while setting forth gifted students' rights to all local education agencies, intermediate education units, and other appropriate target groups (Krisel, 1999).

Thus, Georgia's State Board of Education Nelson (1996), searched to provide gifted educational services to minority students who had the potential for exceptional academic achievement. The gifted policy purpose was to ensure that any tests or procedures used in the referral process for determining eligibility for gifted education services met the standards of validity and reliability and were non-discriminatory with

respect to race, religion, national origin, sex, disabilities, or economic background. For the initial eligibility of a referral consideration for gifted educational services, one must meet a multiple criteria in any three of the following four areas: mental ability (intelligences), achievement (grade point averages), creativity, and motivation (Renzulli's checklists completed by teachers). To automatically become eligible for referral to the gifted programs, one must meet the criterion score on a national norm-referenced test. Information must be collected in each of the four areas for eligibility and evaluated for admission to the gifted program.

Georgia's gifted plans included guidelines for developing and using regulations, along with detailed procedures for local educational agencies and intermediate education units, in order to comply with the state laws and monitor gifted programs' progress. Krisel (1999) stated that once this was done, the data collected would be arranged into three separate categories: policy, statute, or state plan. First, each group would then analyze the data to determine whether the data contained the necessary provisions, including a statement of purpose, identification instruments, placement method, program evaluation tools, personnel standards, an individualized education program, an outline of state and local responsibilities, and a financial statement. Finally, the educational agencies decided whether other provisions should be included or considered in the development of the models.

Georgia's education department realized that giftedness appeared in many different forms and areas within each level of society's cultural groups. Research has shown that discriminatory practices led to a lack of incentive and opportunity for many

individuals so that their superior abilities may be wasted (Educational Policies Commission, 1950; Bristow, 1951; Ford, 1997). The Maryland Report (1971) also revealed that existing services failed to reach a significant sub-population (including minorities and disadvantaged students) while serving only a fraction of the population in general.

Today, the same issues regarding the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs still holds true. The underrepresented and unidentified population still includes those who were characterized by ethnic or cultural group membership (for example African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans) who had language differences or limitations, low socioeconomic status, and who lived in rural or inner city areas or on reservations (Frasier, Garcia & Passow, 1995). Frasier provided three major reasons for the underrepresentation: test bias, selective referrals, and reliance on deficit-based paradigms. Her studies imparted that the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs was most frequently attributed to biases in standardized testing. Many researchers have charged that these tests were for various reasons prejudiced or unfair to ethnic minorities, the economically disadvantaged, and individuals whose first language was not English (Hillard, 1993; Kunjufu, 1993; Hale-Benson, 1982). Thus, the selective referrals involved two factors that had a significant influence on the under-referral process: teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about minority students and the type of norm-referenced test being used. Passow & Frasier (1996) believed the deficit-based paradigms were meant to focus on and recognize weaknesses.

According to Frasier and Passow, these programs were narrow barriers on the large ranges of the multiple intelligences.

However, the major explanations for the low participation of minority students in gifted programs was contributed by state's policies and procedures, identification practices, lack of non-traditional assessment techniques for minority gifted students, and teachers' low number of and/or lack of nominations. The views of Marshall (1993), and Ribich (1996) illustrated that teachers were reluctant to work with students whose cultural, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic status, as well as abilities, were vastly different from their own. Yet, the purpose of states' gifted policies was to ensure full participation in special programs for all potentially gifted students. Studies have shown that it has long been recognized that highly able minority students who come from different cultural or ethnic groups or who have disabilities (learning disabilities, blindness, or family distress) may fail to be recognized as gifted by traditional identification practices (Ford, 1997; Frasier, 1996; Hale-Benson, 1982).

Despite the states' best efforts, the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs continued to increase. Although the many programs that exist have helped to pave a path towards identifying potentially gifted minorities, gifted programs continue to underrepresent minorities. Some organizations received funding from the U. S. Department of Education through grants such as the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Student Education Act of 1988. The Javits Gifted Act was designed to provide financial assistance to states and local educational agencies towards identifying minority

and disadvantaged gifted students. The Javits Act's purpose was to help states modify their gifted identification protocol, including laws, guidelines, rules, and regulations.

Additionally, potentially gifted minority students may be at risk if only traditional identification procedures are used (Frasier, 1996; Ford, 1997; Hillard, 1993). Therefore, the Javits Gifted and Talented Act 1988 was aimed at initiating and coordinating programs for research, project demonstrations, and personnel training. It was also aimed at identifying and meeting the needs of state and local policies for identifying potentially talented minorities, particularly minority students with limited English proficiency. The goal of this organization was to provide assistance in identifying giftedness using a non-traditional process. The non-traditional assessments by the Javits Act were processed for four reasons: 1) to encourage greater public awareness, 2) to improve screening procedures, 3) to provide a formal identification process, and 4) to assist in programs' initiatives (Tatum, 1992; Frasier, 1996). Furthermore, in order to broaden the educational opportunities for all students, educators had to grasp the concept of multiple intelligences and incorporate it into their teaching methods, materials, and assessments (Frasier, 1996).

Once educators had an adequate range of information about their individual and cultural strengths, the underrepresented students' potential talents and gifts would emerge. The initial steps must clearly involve defining and describing the term "gifted" with the recognition that there were multiple characteristics behind giftedness (Hillard, 1986; Nelson, 1996; Ford, 1995). Only then would true gifted educational reform take place.

As for Georgia, the State Board of Education's initiative to establish a broader definition of "giftedness" was in place. Georgia realized that teachers needed training in multiple intelligences as they related to the nomination process of minorities for gifted programs. Also, the traditional assessment techniques used for identifying gifted minority students were too narrow and ineffective (Nelson, 1996). However, Georgia still utilized mental ability intelligence tests, primarily in conjunction with Renzulli's checklists for measuring creativity and motivation, which were based on teachers' perceptions of giftedness and lacked true objectivity (Frasier & Passow, 1996; Ford, 1997).

The Javits Act (1988) reaffirmed analysts' views that within each population there were individuals who had the potential for superior or outstanding achievement but who were in environments where their aptitudes were not recognized or nurtured due to narrow definitions and/or perceptions of giftedness. However, the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs remained stagnant while the disproportionately high placement of minority students in remedial, compensatory, and other special education programs continued to increase (Kunjufu, 1993; Hale-Benson, 1986; Frasier, 1996). The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) became concerned about how the identification practices matched what was known about a student's gift(s) and the program's assessment procedures and about the evaluation services and avenues of communication to parents regarding their child's identification process. The OCR looked at how factors such as physical handicaps, gender, and race affected disadvantaged minority students in relation to the identification of giftedness.

Statement of the Problem

There was a significant underrepresentation in the placement of minority students in gifted programs. In fact, minority students may be underrepresented by as much as 30 to 70 percent with an average of 50 percent underrepresentation of minority students in all gifted programs. Next to mental ability achievement scores, teachers' nominations were the major means for the referral of students to gifted programs. Teachers' recommendations of potentially gifted minority students were often determined by their perceptions of giftedness along with states' definitions of giftedness and the identification processes used for recognizing gifted talents such as performance abilities, creativity, and motivation. Since teachers' perceptions of giftedness had such a significant influence on the placement of minority students in gifted programs, this study explored how teachers' perceptions of giftedness and their job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience affected the ethnic composition of gifted programs, as it relates to the ethnic composition of the school. That is, whether teachers' perceptions of giftedness emphasized mental intelligence or creativity and motivation, as it related to teachers' referrals versus automatic referrals. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions affected how they defined and responded to their specific teaching situations which in turn may have influenced their nominations of minorities to gifted programs.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provided insight on teachers' perceptions of giftedness as they related to Georgia's definitions of giftedness, with emphasis on mental ability

achievement, creativity, and motivation, versus the bright characteristics. These factors were allied with the ethnic composition of gifted programs, which were based on the ethnic composition of the school. Furthermore, teachers' referrals may have influenced the ethnic composition of the gifted program guidelines into wider ranges of identification instruments used along with flexible definitions of giftedness, mandatory staff development in multicultural giftedness, and teachers' awareness of multicultural characteristics. This study investigated the question of whether there were discrepancies in teachers' perceptions of giftedness base on teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience, in relation to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the schools. The study explored whether teachers' nominations of potentially gifted minorities were contingent upon attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions that may have made it difficult for teachers to identify potentially gifted minority students. In addition, this study also explored whether the ethnic composition of the school affected the ethnic composition of the gifted program. These latent fears, attitudes, and misconceptions may very well shape the social and emotional climate in the classrooms. The point at hand was that teachers' attitudes and expectations regarding giftedness might significantly affect students' achievement, motivation, intellectual growth, and placement.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program?

2. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program?
4. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role?
5. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role?
6. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role?
7. Is there a relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school?

Summary

Although there was a consensus that gifted children could be found at every level of society and in every cultural and ethnic group, minority students were disproportionately excluded from gifted programs. The underrepresentation of minority students has been attributed to a variety of factors, including teachers' perceptions of giftedness, biased tests, selective referrals, and a reliance on deficit-based paradigms. To ensure equity in assessment, there was a need to consider a broader range of multiple

factors such as teachers' perceptions of giftedness and their job role (regular and gifted), ethnicity, and years of teaching experience may affect the ethnic composition of the gifted program based on the ethnic composition of the schools. These factors may have affected the way potentially gifted minority children were identified, especially in relation to teachers' referrals versus automatic referrals. Educators needed to grasp the concept of multiple intelligences as it related to the multicultural students' preferred learning styles so that students' gifted talent(s) could emerge. With significant time, research, staff development, and the collaboration of school and home in the identification of the multiple forms of giftedness, educators and parents could improve the gifted identification process and create a program that would be receptive to minority students' gifted characteristics. In Chapter Two, this study reviewed the literature as it related to the underrepresentation of gifted minorities and teachers' perceptions of giftedness.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter reviews the related literature and is divided into five sections as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness; (3) The Underrepresentation of Minority Students in Gifted Programs; (4) Identification of Potentially Gifted Minority Students; and (5) Summary.

The issue of minority students' placement in gifted programs has received more attention in recent years, primarily due to the establishment of Javits grants and the stellar efforts of researchers and educators who have done a considerable amount of research on this issue. Even though the collective efforts have influenced the recruitment of minority students into gifted programs, teachers' perceptions of giftedness still constitute a major roadblock. Equally important, but not overlooked, was the definition of giftedness and the narrow measurement process used in identifying giftedness (Coleman & Gallagher, 1994). For example, the definition of giftedness differed from state to state, and many schools relied almost exclusively on teachers' recommendations in conjunction with students' performance and/or intelligence/achievement test scores (Coleman & Gallagher, 1994).

The lack of consensus regarding how best to define and measure giftedness within multiple cultures made it difficult to estimate the number of gifted minority students who

were underachieving (Ford, 1995). According to Whitmore (1984) and Ford (1995), there were many factors that contributed to the labeling of gifted minority students as underachievers. Among these factors were poor intrinsic motivation, poor academic skills, low self-esteem, negative peer pressure, lack of family involvement, poor student-teacher relations, and low teacher expectations. Ford (1995) found that 46 percent of black students surveyed were underachieving gifted students. Underachievement had been known to manifest itself in the form of poor grades, lack of effort, a tendency to drop out of school, and failure to reach one's academic potential. This was a persistent problem among minority students (Ford & Harris, 1996). The studies on this topic indicated that many students did not drop out because of inadequate ability, but because of alienation caused by poor teacher-student relationships and boredom (Rumberger, 1983; Shapiro et al., 1993). In addition, Frasier (1995) in his study revealed that minority students who had limited proficiency in English and/or who were economically disadvantaged were underrepresented in gifted programs.

Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness

Novice teachers faced formidable tasks of planning and managing as they entered the classrooms as professionals. According to Tomlinson (1994), teachers also brought mental imprints of what teaching and learning were like. These mental imprints were often influenced by: (1) compromised beliefs in the existent definition of giftedness;

(2) ambiguity in the identification of individual differences and needs; (3) shallow wells of strategies for enacting differentiation; and (4) the presence of factors that complicated and discouraged teachers' understanding of students' differences and needs. It had always been assumed that increased training and experience would result in more knowledgeable and skillful teachers.

On the other hand, Diaz (1998) suggested in his study that teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards giftedness could be differentially altered by the behavior of potentially gifted minority students, particularly when the students' behavior did not fall within their teachers' standardized sense of "gifted" characteristics. This suggested the need to further examine and explore teachers' perceptions of giftedness. Research by Passow & Frasier (1996) stated that gifted behavior takes on many different forms in different cultural groups at every level of society.

Once again, teachers' perceptions of giftedness constituted the second largest influence on the placement of minority students in gifted programs.
Ford & Grantham (1998) suggested that teachers may not be the most reliable and qualified sources for identifying potentially gifted minority learners. Reinforcing this study, Karnes & Whorton (1991) reported that only 5 states have statements of teachers' competencies for gifted education. Half of the states required no certification or endorsement in gifted education, while only 14 states required practical experience in gifted education, and only 8 states required that teachers received formal training to help them identify potentially gifted minority students.

According to Ribich (1996), teachers' attitudes and their subsequent dispositions and actions towards gifted minority students influenced their nomination of potentially gifted minority students. In addition, this study suggested that teachers' latent fears, attitudes, and misconceptions may very well shape the social and emotional climate in their classrooms. The end result was that teachers' attitudes and expectations significantly affected students' levels of achievement, motivation, and intellectual growth. Researchers have indicated that teachers had concerns about working with students whose cultural, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds were vastly different from their own (Ribich, 1996; Marshall, 1993; and Barger, 1993). Studies had shown that attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions determined how teachers defined and responded to their specific teaching situations (Goodman, 1985; Ribich, 1996). However, teachers needed to be informed about the large number of gifted minority students whose performance indicated a discrepancy between their academic potential and their actual academic performance (Gardner, 1991; Natalie, 1998).

After all, effective educational decisions and practices must emanate from an understanding of the way individuals learn (Gardner, 1983). Thus, it was essential that teachers understood students' cultures in order to facilitate, structure, and validate students' actual talents (Breen & White, 1996). Ford (1996) noted that teachers were the main reason why minority students were underrepresented in gifted programs. She contended that minorities were underrepresented in gifted programs due to: (1) abstract and disparate definitions of giftedness; (2) inequitable practices in identifying gifted minority students; (3) educators' lack of understanding about cultural differences in

learning styles and achievement aspirations; (4) inadequate preparation of teachers to recognize giftedness among minority students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds; and (5) the lack of encouragement given to minority parents to become involved in the processes related to the identification and selection of gifted students. Once teachers and parents collaborate in the identification practices, the quest for equal opportunities among gifted minority students may be realized.

The Underrepresentation of Minority Students in Gifted Programs

The over-reliance on standardized tests to make decisions about actual or potential giftedness has led to discriminatory tracking practices with minority students being identified as gifted less often than white students (Baldwin, 1977, 1987; Cox & Daniel, 1985; Hadaway, 1992; Kunjufu, 1993). Nevertheless, gifted programs were responsible for providing an educational and experiential base that will make a difference. Demographic trends have shown that an increased amount of attention was being paid to ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in the public school population (American Council on Education, 1993). Furthermore, the current assessment patterns for gifted programs cannot justifiably continue. The potentially gifted minority students within the educational pipeline must be prepared to take over the reins of leadership for the future. As Ford & Harris (1992, 1996) argued, current screening techniques for the identification of potentially gifted minorities only noted weaknesses, instead of identifying potentials. The vastly different cultures, ethnicities, language backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels further confirmed that the processes used to assess and identify

giftedness were biased (Hillard, 1979, 1989; Grantham & Ford, 1998). In many situations, Gardner (1991) argued that a student's actual abilities may not be appropriately measured, and the potential for giftedness may be immeasurable.

Students who were designated as gifted must have increased opportunities for enrichment in order to positively impact their educational and professional futures. Unfortunately, practices used for identifying giftedness had become "steeped in controversy" (Tatum, 1992; Frasier, 1992). Attention had focused on the traditional approach, including the narrow definition of giftedness and multiple identification processes among minority students that were known to be inadequate (Gardner, 1983; Ford, 1996). Bert & Bert (1992) noted that traditional measurements for giftedness rendered minorities less proficient than the majority population. According to Renzulli (1979, 1983), the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs resulted from the continuous using and redesigning of traditional standardized instruments; in other words, test scores that lacked broader definitions of giftedness and various identification apparatuses for minority children.

Frasier (1991) argued that educators needed to question research directions, techniques, and priorities in the identification of gifted minority students in gifted programs. These issues had not been studied because of methodological limitations. Without theory, current research does not become integrated into practice (Cohen & Ambrose, 1983). Further, the lack of theory and appropriate identification practices contributed to an equally important need to focus on the achievement and underachievement of gifted minorities. According to Ford & Thomas (1997), the two

key factors affecting the achievement of gifted minority students, in particular black students, were (1) the definition of giftedness, and (2) the measurement tools used. Whitmore (1984) estimated that at least 20 percent of gifted students underachieve, while the U. S. Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) placed this number at 50 percent. There were many factors that must be examined to understand how and why gifted minority students are underrepresented. Ford & Thomas (1997) revealed in a study that among the factors to be investigated were social-psychological, family, and school factors.

The social-psychological factor could have been a significant contributor to poor self-esteem, low academic skills, and self-conception, according to Ford (1997). Ford & Harris (1996) stated that potentially gifted minority students' racial identity and self-worth must be explored. In other words, how do minority students feel about their racial and ethnic heritage? Do they have a strong, positive racial identity and support system? (Fordham, 1988) indicated that minority students who lacked positive racial identities became vulnerable to negative peer pressure and tended to equate high achievement with acting "white" or "selling out". This poor sense of racial identity contributed to low levels of effort, thus creating underachievement. Hale-Benson (1982), author of Black Children, Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles, reported that many gifted minorities were left to choose between the need for achievement and the need for affiliation. Most often, these students succumbed to negative social pressures due to their need for affiliation that ruled over their decision-

making abilities as to what was expected with regard to academic performance (Hillard, 1979; Kunjufu, 1993).

Few studies have explored the influence of family variables on the success rate of the identification of minority students for gifted programs. On the other hand, Ford (1997), found that parents who had a low socioeconomic status (SES), particularly black parents who held high expectations, aspirations, and standards for their children, could instill a positive achievement orientation in their children. Her study showed that minority parents often sought to promote self-competence and independence in their children. Ford & Thomas (1997) also concluded that gifted minority students with a low SES had parents from all educational levels that wanted the best for their children.

In addition, Ford & Thomas (1997) stated that parental educational levels were not good predictors of minority students' academic performance abilities. Ford (1995) also found that high achievement among gifted minority students frequently resulted from the participation of parents who had positive values and expectations. As a result of their parents' involvement, the gifted minority students exerted more effort towards their studies. School-related factors also influenced the placement of minority students in gifted programs. In a study on gifted black achievers and underachievers, (Ford, 1995) listed numerous school-related factors that contributed to the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs: (1) less positive teacher-student relations; (2) lack of time to understand the material; (3) less supportive classroom climate; and (4) lack of student motivation and interest in school.

Goodman (1985) indicated in a study that teachers' expectations regarding giftedness strongly impacted minority students' placement in gifted programs. He argued that using teachers to identify gifted students presented a problem if the teachers lacked objectivity and were not trained in gifted education and multicultural education. Teachers from other ethnic backgrounds tended to have lower expectations of minority and low-income students (Hillard, 1983, 1986; Hale-Benson, 1986; Ford, 1995). Low teacher expectations with regard to minority gifted students may have resulted in these students not being identified as gifted or in their being identified as underachievers (Frasier, 1996).

The under-prepared teachers were less likely to refer minority students by using the identification checklists that could help them identify potentially gifted minority students (Renzulli et al., 1993). Thus, when minority students did not have access to appropriate education, they tended to have difficulty reaching their potential (Kunjufu, 1993). According to Ford & Harris (1995), underachievement among minority students was due to disinterest, frustration, and lack of challenge. Theories about the causes of the disproportionately low enrollment of minority students in gifted programs have ranged from limited and confusing definitions of giftedness to biased tests (Frasier, 1995) to negative and uninformed reactions to giftedness by minority parents (Ford, 1997, 1998).

Educational programs must acknowledge non-cognitive and non-academic skills such as creativity and psychomotor abilities so that gifted minority students could reach their academic potential. In addition, Ford (1997) stated that all learning materials should

accurately represent multiple cultural groups so that they can set in motion the concepts of cultural diversity. Thus, non-traditional and pluralistic instruments were crucial in identifying gifted minority students. Gordon (1996) noted that the prevailing standards by which academic competence was judged included in large measure such things as: (a) what most persons at a specific level of development can do, or (b) what society agrees was necessary for students to achieve and/or do through traditional methods. Gordon (1996) argued that an equally important problem in the assessment of potential giftedness was the failure of gifted programs to provide equal educational treatment and learning opportunities for minority students.

Identification of Potentially Gifted Minority Students

The ability to give every child a chance to succeed in school was contingent upon a full understanding of different cultures and learning styles. Guild (1995) argued that effective educational decisions and practices must emanate from an understanding of the different ways in which individuals learn. Thus, knowing each student's culture would enable educators to identify their students' multiple talent(s). However, the different explanations regarding gifted characteristics within different cultures could lead to confusion, according to Barger (1993), which in turn could create a gap between cultural values and learning styles. The existent research provided very little encouragement regarding the relationship that existed between the cultures in which children live (or from which they descend) and their preferred ways of learning. Bert & Bert (1992) explained that these relationships often hinder the academic, social, and emotional

success of potentially gifted minority students. Other studies have shown that generalizations about a group of people often led to negative stereotypes about individual cultural groups (Hale-Benson, 1986; Hillard, 1989; and Guild, 1994).

Some educators, including Passow & Frazier (1996) believed that variations among and within cultural groups contributed to the ways in which different talents were valued and whether these talents were sought, identified, cultivated, developed, and rewarded. Furthermore, disregarding the differences within and among the various minority groups made it significantly more difficult to identify potential talent(s). Passow & Frasier (1996) reviewed the research literature and suggested a number of ways to improve the identification of potentially gifted minority students. They made the following observations: (1) No single "theory of giftedness" was acceptable but rather many concepts should be employed to view the phenomenon as complex, multifaceted, and multidimensional; (2) The identification and nurturing of the talent(s) that were collectively called ""schoolhouse giftedness" constituted an integral component for nurturing gifted potential of many kinds and levels, without cultural boundaries; (3) No culture or population has a monopoly on any talent potential, whatever its nature; (4) As with all individual gifted traits, the aptitudes, attributes, and characteristics that were associated with gifted students could be encouraged or inhibited by rewards or sanctions. Whether and/or how a particular gifted characteristic or trait manifests itself depended on the context in which it existed and was exercised; (5) Understanding and comprehending the significance of culturally gifted characteristics will help reduce biases, prejudices, and the negative stereotyping of minority groups; (6) The

identification of potentially gifted minority students and the cultivation of one's gifts must be viewed as an integrated process; (7) Social status context must be taken into account; (8) Schools and classes that were segregated or racially unbalanced and that have poor facilities, fewer instructional resources, larger classes, fewer programs for gifted students, more inexperienced teachers, and other limited or unequal educational opportunities are inhibitive factors; (9) Decisions about giftedness in children were no more than predictions; and (10) Valid assessment procedures and strategies used to identify and nurture potentially gifted minority students must deal effectively with both the actual and perceived problems of the traditional methods for identifying talent(s). There was no question that a new paradigm will help include subpopulations that have not been adequately identified and whose potential gifts have not been sufficiently nurtured so that they can reach their fullest potential.

Summary

Since minority students were underrepresented in gifted programs nationally, school districts should focus on talent development and on nurturing minority students' abilities. Identifying gifted minority students may be difficult due to biased achievement tests that led to many factors that were manifested as underachievment through teachers' perceptions of giftedness. Test score results and teachers could not recognize minority students' strengths without proper knowledge and the use of multiple identification instruments and diverse procedures. The socio-emotional and psychological variables should be examined during the identification process as well as the impact of racial

identity and anxiety on gifted minority students' performance, achievement, and motivation.

The integration of multi-cultural approaches will promote self-understanding and self-appreciation among minority students. Nurturing the home-student-school partnership is essential in improving the identification of gifted minority students. The underrepresentation of gifted minority students continues to highlight special problems such as the narrow definition of giftedness that omitted the multiple talents, teachers' perceptions of giftedness, teachers' low nomination rates, and biased and selective standardized tests. For gifted minority students to finally achieve their academic potential, educators must ensure that equity becomes a main goal in the contemporary movement to achieve educational excellence through multiple criteria. Excellence cannot exist without equity and respect for individual differences, qualities that are long overdue in pubic education (Ford & Harris, 1992). Chapter Three investigated the theoretical framework that facilitated this change.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

There was a clear need to increase the participation of minority students in gifted education programs. The major factors that contributed to the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs included: narrow definitions of giftedness; teachers' perceptions of giftedness; too little attention given to non-traditional assessment barriers for achievement; too little attention given to learning style preferences; the over-reliance on standardized tests; and the lack of parent involvement in the identification process (Ford, 1997). All of these factors contributed to the achievement and/or underachievement of potentially gifted minority students. A major related issue of concern had to do with the discrepancies in the expected gifted individual's behavior, abilities, and performance (Ford, 1995, 1996; USDE, 1993; Hale-Benson, 1986). Research indicated that the narrow definition of giftedness had filtered down into school districts as was evidenced by traditional mainstream teaching methods, norm-referenced tests, and teachers' perceptions of giftedness in relation to the placement of minorities in gifted programs. As a result, the lack of multiple criteria for identifying giftedness and teachers' perceptions of giftedness segregated gifted minorities. This resulted in minority students being labeled underachievers rather than gifted individuals (Ford, 1998; Frasier, 1995).

Along with the increasing underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs, the term "underachiever" had been increasingly applied to potentially gifted minority students. Frequently, the term underachiever was defined by noting the discrepancies between standardized measurements and the student's actual school performances. According to Ford & Harris (1996), this was evident from the lack of consensus concerning the identification and assessment methods used by states. These methods included: 1) mental intelligence test scores combined with grades; 2) mental intelligence test scores combined with ability test scores; 3) achievement test scores combined with grades; 4) achievement test scores combined with ability test scores; 5) ability test scores combined with grades; or 6) any combination of the above.

Ford, Harris, & Winborne (1990) and Patton (1992) contended that these types of assessment methods often failed to capture the true abilities of potentially gifted minority students. Sternberg, author of Triarchic Theory of Intelligence (1988), confirmed that the educational needs of most minority students were not satisfied due to the use of unidimensional instruments for assessing giftedness. According to Sternberg (1988), intelligence could be manifested in at least three ways: contextual, experiential, and componential. Contextual learners adapted to their environments, a skill that was not measured by mental intelligence tests. Experiential learners valued creativity, liked novelty, disliked rules, and had few rules of their own because they viewed these rules as an inconvenience. Componential learners were viewed as analytical and abstract thinkers who performed well on standardized tests and in school. Gardner (1983), in Theory of Multiple Intelligence, argued that the definition of intelligence should allow the

individual to use his or her own talent(s) of expression to solve problems or to modify functional products that are valued in one or more cultural settings.

Gardner (1983) further argued that equity was lacking in intelligence tests and that culturally valued activities should be used to determine giftedness. He believed these changes could very well reverse the underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs. He also went on to state that an intrinsic strategy must be installed to manage school-related factors. School-related factors had influenced the achievement and placement of gifted minority students in gifted programs. According to Ford's (1995) study of school-related factors the underrepresentation of minority students was due to: 1) less positive teacher-student relations; 2) students having had too little time to understand the materials; 3) less supportive classroom climates; and 4) a lack of motivation caused by disinterest in the schools' curriculum. In addition, studies by Good (1981) and Ford and Thomas (1997) indicated that teachers' perceptions of giftedness had an impregnable impact on student achievement. Using teachers to identify potentially gifted minorities could have presented problems if the teachers lacked objectivity or were not trained in gifted and multicultural education. Researchers and educators concurred that teachers tended to expect less of black students and lower income minority students than any other students (Hillard, 1983;Tomlinson, 1992; Hale-Benson, 1986; Ford, 1997).

Consequently, minority students may not have been identified as being gifted (Gardner, 1985; Ford, 1995, 1996, 1998). The end result was that those potentially gifted minority students went unrecognized and/or were labeled as underachievers. The definition of giftedness and the identification practices that were used combined with

teachers' perceptions of giftedness could significantly affect the placement of minorities in gifted programs. In many cases, giftedness became a biased assumption that was based on teachers' perceptions of giftedness and/or their expectations regarding gifted characteristics among minorities (Frasier, 1995). This fact regarding biases could not be overlooked in discussing the screening process to identify potentially gifted minorities (Frasier, Garcia & Passow, 1995).

The intensity of the debate that surrounded the definition of giftedness vindicated the need for an investigation into the relationship between teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience, in relation to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the school. These variables may have influenced teachers' perceptions of giftedness in the placement of minority students in gifted programs. Research indicated that a study should be conducted to view the relationships between teachers' job role, ethnicity, and as they related to teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the emphasis placed by Georgia's definition of giftedness on creativity and motivation. Thus, these relationships may have influenced the ethnic composition of the gifted program as it related to the ethnic composition of the schools, which may be allied with teachers' perceptions of giftedness. If positive changes were to occur, then strategies must be provided to improve teachers' awareness and knowledge of giftedness as they related to teachers' job role, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, using Georgia's identification process. Home-student-school collaborations were essential in closing the gap between the state's definition of giftedness and teachers' perceptions of giftedness. This

collaboration could bridge the placement of minorities in Georgia's gifted programs using all stakeholders input in the identification process and assessment.

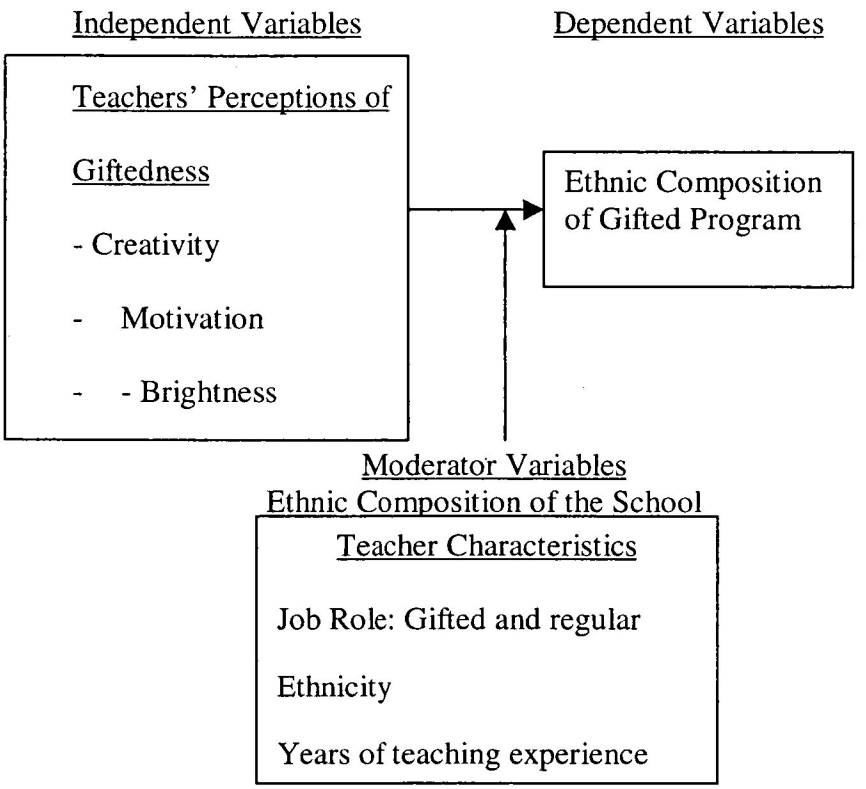
Presentation and Definition of the Variables

Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness as Independent Variables

Independent variables were manipulated by investigators in order to assess their possible effect(s) on the dependent variables. This study's independent variables were teachers' perceptions of giftedness as they related to identifying creative, motivation, and bright characteristics as it related to the ethnic composition of the school. Thus, teachers' perceptions of giftedness may have affected their referrals. The referrals under the state of Georgia's definition of giftedness and the identification instrument used by the DeKalb County School System, Renzulli's checklist, were used to measure and evaluate creative and motivation giftedness. Figure 1 illustrated the position of the suggested relationship among the variables.

Figure 1

Figural Representation of Theoretical Framework



Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness

Teachers' expectations influenced students' performances (Frasier, 1994). In order to stimulate a student's performance, Guild (1995) believed that knowledge of different cultures' distinctive learning styles was vital. However, the greater the variation among individuals within groups, the more important it was that educators used diverse teaching strategies with all students so that the students' potential talent(s) could surface. Early research into this issue by Pegnato & Birch (1959) and today by researchers Ford (1998) and Frasier (1996) concluded that teachers lacked the ability to identify potential

giftedness due to a "cultural mismatch." Due to the lack of consensus regarding the definition "gifted," according to Ford & Harris (1991), teachers' perceptions of giftedness ultimately influenced gifted minority students' chances for placement within a gifted program.

Teachers had their own perceptions of creativity, motivation, and bright characteristics. Teachers defined a creative, gifted child as one who discovered the rules and technical skills of their domain on their own with minimum adult scaffolding and often invented unusual strategies by which to solve problems. However, children are rarely, if ever, creative in this sense. When domains of a child's creativity are changed, it is only because an adult connected to the domain recognized something of value in the children's work and nurtured it (Ford, 1998). The definition of motivation is perceived by teachers as a child who is highly motivated to achieve and can persevere in hard work. Yet, Hale-Benson (1982) suggested that circumstances under which children "turn on" to the school curriculum must be integrated with children's cultures and situations. In addition, Hale-Benson claimed that current assessment procedures are so culturally bound that they only sample instances of achievement motivation associated with a given culture. As for teachers' definition of bright characteristics, this was defined as being clever, well behaved, on task, and the ability "to make the grade." Once again, studies by Ford & Thomas (1997) tend to focus on such characteristics as good behavior, cooperation, answering correctly, punctuality, and neatness as recommendations to the gifted program. As a result, teachers tend to identify average students as gifted.

In addition, researchers in the field of counseling psychology maintained that racial identity was embedded in one's consciousness and value system and that the latter was socially developed (Tatum, 1992; Tettegah, 1996). These same researchers also agreed that one's racial identity affected the development of racial attitudes towards oneself and others. Educational literature had identified a difference in teachers' attitudes with regard to black and white teachers' attitudes towards black versus white students (Good & Brophy, 1986; Shapiro, 1995; Tatum, 1992). Ford (1994) noted that racist attitudes have historically been common among teachers. Furthermore, researchers had shown that many problems that occurred in the classrooms with regard to minority student achievement and learning opportunities were due to this "cultural mismatch" between teachers and students. In addition, these mismatches were intimately tied to perceptions of ethnic differences (Tatum, 1992).

Hale-Benson (1982), author of Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles, agreed that teachers' perceptions of students' abilities would determine the level of attention and opportunity the students would receive in a classroom. On the other hand, some researchers contended that teachers' expectations and attitudes about students were contingent upon the parent-teacher relationship (Ford, 1998). The result was that minority students were underrepresented in gifted programs.

Teachers' perceptions: This term referred to teachers' expectations regarding gifted students' behavior, performance, and the teachers' aspirations for these students for referral to the gifted programs.

Gifted: This term referred to a student who demonstrated a high degree of intellectual, creative, and/or artistic abilities, who had exceptional leadership skills, or who excelled in a specific academic field and required alternative instruction to achieve his or her goals.

Ethnic Composition of Gifted Programs: This term referred to the cultural and/or racial groups' mixture within gifted programs as it related to teachers' and automatic referrals.

Ethnic Composition of Gifted Programs as the Dependent Variables

Dependent variables were subject to change(s) in behavior, which was contingent upon independent variables. As an outcome variable, the dependent variable could not be manipulated by the investigator. In this study, the dependent variables were the ethnic composition of gifted programs as they related to the ethnic composition of the school based on the mode of referral from teachers' referrals and automatic referrals. The variable may have been influenced by the teachers' perceptions of creative and motivation giftedness and bright characteristics.

The Ethnic Composition of Gifted Programs as it Relates to the Ethnic Composition of the School

There has been a serious underrepresentation of culturally different students in gifted programs. In fact, Maker (1996) stated that this underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs could precipitate other problems. Eligible for gifted, but

unplaced, ethnic minority students when compared to a similar group of eligible students who were placed in a gifted program, were more likely to have dropped out of school and less likely to have gone to college (Howell, 1998). In general, the reasons for the low enrollment were contributed to teachers and administrators in inner-city schools who were not expecting to find academically gifted minority students in their classrooms, while parents of these children were not aware of gifted programs and their children's academic needs. As a result, the equity gap was still an issue as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted programs in the schools.

Students were referred to DeKalb County School's gifted programs under Georgia's definition of giftedness by way of teachers' referrals (with regard to creativity and motivation) and/or by automatic referrals (have used norm-referenced tests). Some school districts depended solely on norm-referenced intelligence or achievement tests as the primary assessment instruments for determining students' placement in gifted programs. However, according to Gardner (1983, 1989), only two types of intelligences, logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligence, could be measured by such tests. The other five of the seven types of intelligences: interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, and musical intelligence, could not be measured. Thus, many potentially gifted minority students whose gifts differed from standardized assessments have gone underrepresented. The underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs were associated with use of the USDE definition of giftedness that tended to privilege students who displayed giftedness in intellectual and specific academic areas as opposed

to those whose strengths resided in the creative, visual, or performing arts, and in leadership areas (Ford, 1997; Ford & Harris, 1991; Harris & Ford, 1991).

Yet, multi-dimensional and multi-modal assessment strategies were used less frequently even though many researchers emphasized the importance of these methods (Torrence, 1984; Patton, 1992; Ford, 1997). Furthermore, most holistic assessment strategies, culturally-sensitive tests, parent and peer nominations, creativity checklists, student portfolios, and performance assessments had been recognized as offering promising strategies for identifying gifted minority students along with proper training on gifted characteristics (Coleman & Gallagher, 1994; Ford, 1996, 1997). Nevertheless, cut-off numbers, mental intelligence test scores, and percentile ranking continued to be the main and required identification practices used for gifted education placement.

Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program: This term referred to the cultural and/or racial group mixture within gifted programs as it related to teachers' and automatic referrals.

Ethnic Composition of the School: This term referred to the total mixture of the cultural and/or racial groups of the schools' population.

Identification Practice: This term referred to Renzulli's check list, the instruments and procedures used to validate and measure an individual's talent or potential talent that are motivation and creativity.

Referral: To be considered for gifted educational services, a student may be referred for consideration by teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, guardians, peers, or other(s) who may had have knowledge of the individual's abilities.

Automatic Referral: Students who scored at specified levels on norm-referenced tests were automatically referred for gifted services.

Teachers' Job Role, Ethnicity, and Years of Teaching Experience as Moderator Variables

Moderator variables were treatment variables or were subject to characteristics variables. They were used to manipulate the interaction between independent and dependent variables. This study's moderator variables were teachers' ethnicity, job role, years of teaching experience. These interacting factors could have impacted teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the ethnic composition of the gifted programs as it related to the ethnic composition of the school.

Teachers' Characteristics

Job Role: The job role in which one is employed by DeKalb County Schools either as a regular teacher or as a gifted teacher.

Ethnicity: The teacher's racial, national, or cultural group in the DeKalb County School System.

Years of Teaching Experience: The period of time the teacher has been employed to teach within the DeKalb County School System.

Hypotheses

The following seven hypotheses were tested in this study.

1. There is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.
2. There is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.
3. There is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.
4. There is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.
5. There is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.
6. There is no relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.
7. There is no relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school.

Limitations of This Study

1. The teacher sampling varied and was subjected to a greater margin of error than a larger sample would be.
2. Research studies in this area were scarce which made comparisons as to the significance of the findings difficult.
3. Participation was contingent on voluntary effort.
4. Answers to the questionnaires were contingent on honesty.
5. The common practices of identification processing were limited to DeKalb County Elementary Schools, therefore, the dissemination of identification processes may have varied among counties.

Summary

The theoretical framework of this study delineated the relationships between independent, dependent, and moderator variables as they in turn related to the input and output variables. The dependent variables were the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. The independent variables were teachers' perceptions of giftedness as they related to creativity, motivation and the bright characteristics. The moderated variables were teachers' ethnicity, years of teaching experience and job role.

In addition, this chapter examined the research regarding the definitions of giftedness, teachers' perceptions of giftedness, and the identification practices used to

place minority students in gifted programs. It also investigated how these factors related to the ethnic composition of the gifted programs and the ethnic composition of the schools. This chapter indicated the hypotheses and limitations of this study. Chapter Four provided the research methodology.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

Introduction

A descriptive study was conducted to determine a relationship between teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the placement of minority students in gifted programs. These issues related to selected teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience as it related to the ethnic composition of gifted programs. The study was conducted in 12 of the DeKalb County elementary schools in relationship to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the schools, and the gifted teachers within the 77 elementary schools in metropolitan areas in Dekalb County School System. Teachers' perceptions of giftedness were influenced by Georgia's definition of giftedness and the identification practices used to validate and measure students' talent(s). These perceptions, in turn, may have influenced teachers' referrals of minority students to gifted programs. The moderator variables that were examined included teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. This chapter described the setting, sampling procedures, instruments, and statistical analysis that were used in this study.

Research Design

The research design for this quantitative and descriptive study allowed the investigator to explore the degree of precision pertaining to the relationship between two

or more variables. This degree of precision was established through a correlation coefficient and ANOVA. The study observed the degree to which teachers' perceptions of giftedness influenced the placement of minority students in DeKalb County elementary gifted programs. In particular, it examined the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school in relationship to the identification practices used from school to school in the DeKalb County School System in Georgia. This study investigated the relationship of teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience, for making referrals, with regards to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the school make-up. Inferential statistics and the *Pearson "r"* were used to provide descriptive statistics, mean scores, and standard deviations to organize, describe, summarize, and illuminate the observations obtained.

Description of the Setting

The study was conducted in 12 DeKalb County Elementary Schools and included the 77 elementary schools' gifted teachers located in the county. The metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia included 14 counties, the majority of which include various school types: city, public, county, and private (Krisel, 1998). The public schools had to comply with the state of Georgia's set identification practices and definitions of giftedness for identifying potentially gifted minority students. Most of Georgia's schools were elementary schools, and some of Atlanta's public schools were magnet and theme schools. The magnet schools consisted of gifted students, while the theme schools emphasized basic skills, which used an interdisciplinary approach. These schools

provided a medley of extracurricular activities. Also, Georgia's school system provided special education services to children regardless of their disabilities. The gifted students population within Georgia consisted of 60,196 Caucasians, 8,440 African Americans, 621 Hispanics, 2,811 Asian Americans, 84 Native Americans, and 664 other multi-racial groups (Krisel, 1998). DeKalb County's gifted program utilized the twice a year observation windows for screening potentially gifted students with motivational and creative characteristics. After a student manifested these characteristics, the teachers rated the students' motivation and creative characteristics having used the Renzulli checklist. In addition, the ethnic composition of the school provided an indication of what the ethnic composition of the gifted program should be, as it related to teachers' referrals within the ethnic composition of the school.

Sampling Procedures

The samples were drawn from the 77 DeKalb County elementary schools' gifted teachers and twelve Dekalb elementary schools' regular teachers from a stratified random sampling. The four stratified groups were based on the schools' free and reduced lunch recipients. The following stratified sampling schools from each of the four groups (low, medium-low, medium, and high lunch recipients) were randomly selected. The schools with a high percentage of free and reduced-priced lunches were Cary Reynolds, Indian Creek, and Hooper Alexander. Medium percentages of free and reduced-priced lunches were Avondale, Dunaire, and Fairington. The medium-low percentages of free and reduced-priced lunches were Hambrick, Shadow Rock, and Rockbridge, and schools with

low percentages of free and reduced-priced lunches were Midvale, Henderson Mill, and Fernbank. The stratified random rationale provided an equal distribution in the diversity of the ethnic composition of the school as well as the ethnic composition of the gifted program, within the various level of socioeconomic status (free and reduced lunches) of Dekalb County elementary schools. In accordance with Borg & Gall (1989), the sampling of the population was congruent with the existent population.

As for the regular teachers, on the average, each school consisted of four teachers per grade level. Therefore, thirty questionnaires were hand-delivered to each principal with a letter stating the directions. However, the 77 gifted questionnaires were sent through the DeKalb County interoffice mail.

As mentioned earlier, gifted students were recommended to the gifted program by teachers' referrals, which were second to norm-referenced tests as the preferred means of selection for the gifted programs. These recommendations provided the largest number of referrals of minority students to gifted programs. However, the proportion of teachers who were Caucasians, African-Americans, and Others (Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, or of other racial/ethnic groups) may have varied within the classroom. In addition, the education and knowledge of giftedness among teachers may have varied in relation to each teacher's job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience, along with the ethnic composition of the school. The data came from teachers within the 12 stratified random elementary schools' regular schoolteachers and the 77 elementary schools' gifted teachers during the 1999 Spring semester.

Description of the Instrument

A questionnaire was used to obtain responses regarding the degree of relationship between teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the placement of minority students within DeKalb County's elementary gifted programs as these items related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. The questionnaire was based on a review of the literature on the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs and teachers' perceptions of giftedness, and the underachievement of minority students as it related to minority students' placement in the gifted program. Placement in the DeKalb County elementary gifted program was defined under the term "giftedness" which related to creativity and motivation. Renzulli checklist was used to measure teachers' perceptions of creativity and motivation within the DeKalb County School System. The questionnaire was analyzed on the four-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree). Furthermore, the investigation instrument was designed to provide data regarding the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Thus, this related to teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience and their perceptions of giftedness-creativity and motivation in the placement of minority students in DeKalb County elementary gifted programs. Teachers' perceptions of giftedness may have influenced their referrals.

The instrument contained 45 items designed to measure selected teachers' perceptions of giftedness as it related to creativity, motivation, and bright characteristics. Items 1 – 11 were designed to measure teachers' perceptions of motivation

characteristics; items 12 – 23 measured teachers' perceptions of creativity characteristics; items 24 – 39 measured teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics; and items 40 – 45 were designed to provide demographic data (job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience).

Validity and Reliability

For an instrument to be credible, it has to be validated. Validity was based on the degree to which tests measured purposeful data (Borg & Gall, 1989). Validation of this instrument was the Renzulli's Motivation and Creativity Checklist used by the DeKalb County School System to measure creativity and motivation characteristics. The questionnaires were reviewed by experts from Clark Atlanta University and DeKalb County School System's coordinator of the gifted program who evaluated the format and presentation, content validity, concurrent validity, face validity, test reliability, diction or word choice, and sensitivity of the test items. A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 30 gifted teachers and regular teachers within the DeKalb County Schools to establish content validity and face validity. The scores were analyzed in terms of the correlation of responses using Cronbach's internal consistency analytical method. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.85, which was satisfactory for this study.

Data Collection

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Research and Evaluation Department of the DeKalb County School System. Data for the investigation was

obtained from the schools that were stratified and randomly selected. The questionnaires were distributed on a faculty meeting day so that all responses were obtained in one setting. The rationale for administrating the questionnaires on a faculty meeting day was that attendance was mandatory for faculty meetings. In addition, the participating volunteer teachers were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. Principals and instructional lead teachers distributed and collected the questionnaires. In addition, the questionnaires used in the study consisted of those that were completed according to the instructions. The researcher collected and collated the data received from the instructional lead teachers from the 12 elementary schools' regular teachers and the 77 elementary schools' gifted teachers.

Statistical Applications

The collected data from this research illustrated whether there was a definable relationship between teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the placement of minority students in DeKalb County Schools' gifted programs. These relationships were based on items related to teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience, with regards to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the school. Students' referrals to the gifted program were the result of the teachers' perceptions of giftedness within the ethnic composition of the school. In addition, the investigation provided descriptive statistics regarding the identification practices used in schools as teachers made referrals using Renzulli's checklist to measure creativity and motivation. The descriptive statistics revealed the ethnic composition of the gifted program and teachers'

perceptions of creativity, motivation, and bright characteristic as it related to the ethnic composition of the schools investigated. Furthermore, the statistics incorporated the mean and standard deviations in their measurements. The *Pearson "r"* provided the appropriated measurement to represent the set of data in either interval or rubric scales (Borg & Gall, 1989). The *Pearson "r"* calculated the scores with the most accurate measurement of correlation. The correlation coefficient, which was a decimal number between .00 and +1.00 or .00 and –1.00, was contingent on the degree to which the variables were related. Thus, if the coefficient was near +1.00 (approximately .75+), then the variables were related. However, if the coefficient was closer to .00, the variables were not related. If the coefficient was closer to –1.00, then the variables were inversely or negatively related. In addition to the *Pearson "r"*, the investigation provided descriptive statistics such as the mean and the standard deviations to highlight the moderators: teacher' ethnicity, years of teaching, and job role (gifted and regular). The analysis of the variance (ANOVA) were conducted to discover if there were differences in the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the school, as it related to the moderated variables.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research methods and procedures that were used in this study. The study used a correlation research design and analysis of the variance to determine whether a relationship existed between teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the placement of minority students in DeKalb County Schools' gifted programs. It also

compared teachers' perceptions of creativity, motivation, and bright characteristics as they related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. The samples included teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience within the metropolitan Atlanta areas of DeKalb County in Georgia.

The selection of the elementary schools was based on a stratified random process. The instrument used was the Renzulli's checklist to measure creativity and motivation to identify giftedness. The context and face validity of the instrument was evaluated by a panel of experts from Clark Atlanta University and by the DeKalb County Schools coordinator of the gifted program. Once approval was obtained to conduct the study, questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, mean and standard deviations, and the *Pearson "r"*.

Chapter Five

Analysis of Data

Introduction

The intent of this research investigation was to explore teachers' perceptions of giftedness and minority students' placements in DeKalb County elementary schools gifted programs. The independent variables were teachers' perceptions of gifted characteristics: creativity, motivation, and brightness. Moderator variables included teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. The dependent variables were the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. Surveys were used to gather data for the study and the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

This chapter examines and analyzes data related to the seven hypotheses outlined in Chapter Three. The findings of the data analyses are presented in tabular format along with accompanying narratives. The analyses resulted in either acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

During the 1998-99 academic year, the teachers' perceptions of giftedness surveys were distributed to 358 elementary schools' regular teachers and the 98 elementary schools' gifted teachers in DeKalb County's elementary schools in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia. Two hundred and fifty-three teachers returned completed surveys, which represented a response rate of 56 percent participation. A letter soliciting

participation accompanied each questionnaire. A copy of this letter is included in the appendix. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of teachers who participated in the study according to ethnicity, job role, and years of teaching experience variables.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample Teachers in Terms of Moderator Variables

	Teachers	
	N	%
Ethnicity		
African Americans	101	39.8
Caucasians	136	53.8
Others	13	5.2
Missing Data	3	1.2
Total	253	100.0
Job Role		
Regular Teacher	158	62.5
Gifted Teacher	89	35.2
Missing Data	6	2.4
Total	253	100.1

	Teachers	
	N	%
Years of Teaching Experience		
Less than 1	15	5.9
1-5	62	24.5
6-10	59	23.3
11-15	41	16.2
16-20	30	11.9
21+	39	15.4
Missing Data	6	2.8
Total	253	100.0

Table 1 provides a summary of the teachers who participated in the study according to their subgroups. The sample group was comprised of two hundred fifty three teachers. Of the two hundred fifty three teachers, 53.8 percent being the majority, were Caucasians, followed by 39.8 percent African Americans. The Other ethnic group was 5.2 percent. Due to the fact that participation was strictly voluntary, the researcher could not select or pressure individuals to participate based on any single factor, such as ethnicity.

In terms of job role, 62 percent (62%) were regular teachers and 34.2 percent (34.2%) were gifted teachers. However, within the 77 elementary schools, 98 are gifted teachers within the DeKalb County School System who were surveyed with a 91 percent (91%) completion. The teachers' years of teaching experience indicated that teachers with 1 – 5 years of teaching experience made up about 24 percent (24%) participation, followed by 6 – 10 years of teaching experience with 23.3 percent (23.3%) participating in the study. The other groups of teaching experience were about equal in participation. It is important to note that the number of gifted teachers within a school is contingent upon the number of students in the gifted program at that particular school.

Seven hypotheses were generated to guide this investigation, and each hypothesis sought to establish the existence of a relationship between the stated variables. Hence, the hypotheses in this study were tested using the *Pearson "r"* to determine if there was a relationship between teachers' perceptions of giftedness (motivation, creativity and bright characteristics) as it is relates to the ethnic composition of the gifted program within the ethnic composition of the schools.

Analysis of Null Hypotheses

The hypotheses were analyzed using the Pearson r Correlation Coefficient and ANOVA statistical research methods. The calculated value using SPSS version 9.0 was compared to the *Pearson r* table value at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance to determine whether the null hypotheses would be accepted or rejected. If the calculated value was greater than the table value, the null hypothesis was rejected. If the calculated value was less than the table value, then the null hypothesis was accepted. The null hypotheses used in this study, along with the resulting analysis, are presented below. In addition, the null hypotheses referred to the number of schools participating in the study. The *Pearson "r"* Correlation Coefficient matrix on Table 2 displays data relating to the null hypotheses, one through three.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.

A Pearson product-moment coefficient *r* was computed to determine if a significant relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. The results are displayed in Table 2, which follows.

Table 2

Correlation Coefficients Among Variables: Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity, Motivation, and Bright Characteristics as it Relates to the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program

		n	Crtivity	Mvation	Bright
BLACK	Pearson Correlation	12	-.309	-.493	.125
	Sig (2-tailed)	12	.328	104	.684
WHITE	Pearson Correlation	12	.300	.189	.369
	Sig (2-tailed)	12	.370	.577	.237
OTHER	Pearson Correlation	12	.330	.363	.145
	Sig (2-tailed)	12	.322	.273	.654

Table 2 indicated correlation coefficients between teachers' perceptions of creativity, motivation, and bright characteristics as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program with the 12 schools in DeKalb County in this study, which were not significant at the .05 level for each of the variables according to the perception of teachers. The results of Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also reflected in this table and were referred to when they were being addressed. The correlation coefficient between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in Table 2 were ($\underline{r}$ = -.309, N = 12,P< .328) for Black students; ($\underline{r}$ =.300, N = 12, P<.370)

for White students; (r = .330, N =12, P< .322) for Other students. The results revealed that teachers had an inverse response to Black students' creativity and motivation characteristics. Thus, teachers may be less likely to refer black students to the gifted program than any other ethnic group based on their perceptions of creativity and motivation, but not significant enough to influence the ethnic composition of the gifted program. The correlation coefficient for the Black students was inverse but not significant at the .05 level. The Pearson correlation for White and Other students yielded no significance at the .05 level. Thus, there were no significant relationships between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Null Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.

Similar to Hypothesis 1, the *Pearson "r"* was again applied to the data to determine if there was a relationship between the stated variables. The result of Hypothesis 2 was also shown on Table 2 on page 56. The obtained correlation coefficient between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program was (r = -.493, N = 12, P< .104) for Black students; (r = .189, N = 12, P <.577) for White students; and (r = .363, N =12, P< .273) for Other students. Once again, there was an inverse relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program as it related to the black students and the ethnic

composition of the gifted program. Thus, teachers may be less likely to refer black students to the gifted program. There were no significant relationships between teachers' motivation and the ethnic composition of the Black, White, and Other students in the gifted program as it related to the ethnic composition of the school at the .05 level of significance. Null hypotheses 2 was, therefore, accepted.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.

Table 3 on page 57 reflected the results of the Pearson product – moment correlation coefficient, which was again employed to indicate if a significant relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. In this case, (r = .125, N = 12, P< .684) was for Black students; (r = .369, N = 12, P< .237) for White students; and (r =.145,N = 12, P< .654) for Other students. These variables of teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program were not significantly correlated. Thus, hypothesis 3 was accepted.

The ethnic composition of the gifted program on Table 3 showed the ethnic composition of the twelve sampled schools. However, the ethnic composition of schools was predominantly Black students.

Table 3

The Minority Composition of DeKalb County's Gifted Program in Elementary Schools

Schools	Minority Percentage in Gifted Program	Minority Percentage in Schools
1. Hooper Alexander	89.5%	90.9% Blacks
	10.5%	5.7% Others
Total	100%	96.6%
2. Avondale	50%	85.7% Blacks
	13.9%	4.6% Others
Total	64%	90.1%
3. Dunaire	85.7%	87.7% Blacks
	14.3%	10.9% Others
Total	100%	98.6%
4. Fairington	92%	97.4% Blacks
	8%	2.3% Other
Total	100%	99.7%
5. Fernbank	77%	32.1% Blacks
	23%	8.1% Others
Total	100%	40.2%
6. Hambrick	95%	90.1% Blacks
	5%	7.4% Others
Total	100%	97.5%
7. Henderson Mill	28%	24.9% Blacks
	72%	28.7% Others
Total	100%	53.6%
8. Indian Creek	78%	66.3% Blacks
	22%	18.4% Other
Total	100%	74.7%

Schools	Minority Percentage in Gifted Program	Minority Percentage in Schools
9. Midvale	92%	51.8% Blacks
	8%	15.3% Other
Total	100%	67.1%
10. Cary Reynolds	100%	4.6% Other
		13.1% Blacks
Total	100%	17.7%
11. Rockbridge	83%	82.4% Blacks
	17%	11.0% Other
Total	100%	93.4%
12. Shadow Rock	98%	93.4% Blacks
	2%	5.2% Other
Total	100%	98.6%
Summary Data of Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program		
	185 Whites	46.6%
	169 Blacks	42.6%
	43 Others	10.8%

Hypothesis 4:

There is no significant difference in the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.

Hypothesis 4 was tested using ANOVA procedures. The resulting F ratio and F probability are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4(a). One – Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in terms of Ethnicity

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	3.429	3.29	.225	.650
Within Groups	2	6.044	3.022	.020	.980
Total	10	1.210			

* * $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .980 relative to the teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in term of ethnicity. This probability was not significant at the .05 level. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 4 (a) was accepted.

Table 4(b) illustrated teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of the years of teaching experience.

Table 4(b). One – Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in Terms of Years of Experience

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	1.173	1.173	.075	.792
Within Groups	2	8.583	4.292	.275	.767
Total	10	1.210			

** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test resulted in a probability of .767 relative to the teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of years of teaching experience. Again, the probability was not significant at the .05 level. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 4(b) was accepted.

Table 4(c) illustrated teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of job role.

Table 4(c). One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Creativity and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in Terms of Job Role

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Combined	3	.238	7.931	.504	.693
Job	1	.160	.160	1.016	.352
2-Way Interactions	1	3.545	3.545	.023	.886
Total	10	1.210	.121		

** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .886 relative to the teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of years of job role. Neither regular nor gifted teachers indicated a relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Thus, the probability was not significant at the .05 level. Null Hypothesis 4 (c) was accepted

Hypothesis 5:

There is no significant difference in the relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching, and (c) job role.

Hypothesis 5 was tested using ANOVA procedures. The resulting F ratio and F probability are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5(a). One – Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Motivation and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in Terms of Ethnicity

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	1.968	1.968	.238	.640
Within Groups	2	.166	8.291	1.003	.414

** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .414 relative to the teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of ethnicity. Because the F probability failed to achieve the .05 level of significance, Null Hypothesis 5(a) was accepted.

Table 5(b) illustrated teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of the years of teaching experience.

Table 5(b). One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Motivation and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in terms of Years of Teaching Experience

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	.164	.162	2.589	.152
Within Groups	2	6.1317	3.069	.492	.631
Total	10	1.210			

** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .631 relative to the teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of years of teaching experience. The resulting F probability value was not significant at the .05 level. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 5(b) was accepted.

Table 5(c) illustrated teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of job role.

Table (5c). One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of the Motivation and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in Terms of Job Role

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Combined	3	.375	.126	1.530	.300
Job	1	1.687	1.667	.206	.666
2-Way Interactions	1	9.952	9.952	1.218	.312
Total	10	.866	8.655		

** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .312 relative to the teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of job role. Table 4 revealed no differences in teachers' perceptions of motivation as it related to job role and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. This probability was not significant at the .05 level. Null Hypothesis 5(c) was accepted.

Hypothesis 6:

There is no significant difference in the relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.

Hypothesis 6 was tested using ANOVA procedures. The resulting F ratio and F probability are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6(a). One – Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Bright Characteristics and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in Terms of Ethnicity

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	7.686	7.686	.001	.979
Within Groups	2	1.526	7.632	.070	.933
Total	11	.895			

** $p < .01$.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .933 relative to the teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in

terms of ethnicity. The probability was not significant at the .05 level. Also, Null Hypothesis 6(a) was accepted.

Table 6(b) illustrated teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of the years of teaching experience.

Table (6b). One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Bright Characteristics and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Programs in Terms of Years of Teaching Experience

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	8.539	8.529	.866	.379
Within Groups	2	3.960	1.980	.201	.822
Total	11	8.132			

** $p < .01$.

This ANOVA test produced a probability of .822 relative to the teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of years of teaching experience. Furthermore, this probability was not significant at the .05 level. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 6(b) was accepted.

Table 6(c) illustrated teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of job role.

Table (6c). One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Bright Characteristics and the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program in Terms of Job Role

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio	F Prob.
Combined	3	.156	5.186	.697	.583
Job	1	8.610	8.610	1.157	.318
2-Way Interactions	1	.301	.301	4.045	.084
Total	11	.895	8.132		

** p <.01.

The ANOVA test produced a probability of .084 relative to the teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of years of job role. Again, teachers' job role has no relationship with teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Thus, probability was not significant at the .05 level. Null Hypothesis 6(c) was accepted.

Hypothesis 7:

There is no significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school.

Table 7 provided a summary of the r values of the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school.

Table 7

Correlation Coefficients of the Ethnic Composition of the Gifted Program and the Ethnic Composition of the School

			Gifted Students
Black Students	n	Pearson Correlation	.578*
	12	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.049*
White Students	n	Pearson Correlation	.900**
	12	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000**
Other Students	n	Pearson Correlation	-.030
	12	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.926

* Significant at p < .05
** Significant at p < .01

An examination of Table 6 indicates the correlation coefficient of the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school for Black students were (r = .578*, N = 12, P <.049); for White students the results were (r = .900**, N = 12, P<.000); and for the Other students the data revealed (r= -.031, N = 12, P< .926).

The results of Hypothesis 7 correlation coefficient revealed a significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school as it related to Black and White Students. There was a significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of school at the .05 level of significance as it related to Black

students. For the White students there was a stronger correlation between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school at the .01 level of significance. The data indicated that Black and White students are not equally proportioned in the gifted program as it relates to the school population. However, white students had a greater chance of being referred to the gifted programs, regardless of the ethnic composition of the school population. The Other students revealed no significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school at the .05 level of significance, which was accepted. Hypothesis 7 was rejected as it related to the ethnic composition for Black and Students. However, as for the Other students, Hypothesis 7 was accepted.

Summary

Data related to the seven hypotheses were presented in this chapter. Each was accepted or rejected based on the data collected from the 253 teachers. There was a 58 percent participation in the study. Eighty-nine of these teachers were gifted. Teachers indicated that there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity, motivation and bright characteristics as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.

However, there was a significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school as it related to Black students and a greater level of significance for White students. However, Other

students indicated no significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. Chapter Six will provide the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations of this investigation of teachers' perceptions of giftedness and minority students' placement in the DeKalb County schools gifted program.

Chapter Six

Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

This investigation studies the relationship between teachers' perceptions of giftedness and the placement of minorities in Georgia's gifted programs. The issues of concern were how teachers' perceptions of giftedness influenced their ability to identify potentially gifted minority students whose ethnic backgrounds differed from their own. In addition, this study investigated the identification process of giftedness as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. Questionnaires were administered to 98 gifted teachers within the 77 DeKalb County elementary schools and the 356 regular teachers within the 12 DeKalb County elementary schools. These questionnaires' validity and reliability were based on Renzulli's checklist, an instrument used to identify motivation and creativity gifted characteristics. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, mean, standard deviation, the *Pearson "r"*, and ANOVA. Chapter Six discussed the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Findings

This research studied teachers' perceptions of giftedness in relation to the definition of giftedness: creativity, motivation, and bright characteristics. Moderators of

teachers' perceptions of giftedness was based on teachers' job role, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. Also, a descriptive study was conducted using the moderators as they related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the schools within the 12 DeKalb County elementary schools and the gifted teachers within the 77 elementary schools investigated. The findings from this research study allowed the researcher to recognize some implications and draw some conclusions. These findings were centered on the demographic characteristics of the teachers' perceptions of giftedness (motivation, creative giftedness and bright characteristics), in reference to teachers' ethnicity, job role, and years of teaching experience as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the schools.

To achieve these goals, seven hypotheses were generated and tested using the Pearson r, and the results of these tests were analyzed in Chapter Five. The paragraphs that follow presented the outcomes or findings of this study.

Hypothesis 1:

There was no significant relationship between all teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson r correlation coefficient and the result was -.309 for the Black students; .300 for the White students; and .330 for the Other students within the gifted program. These figures were not significant at the .05 level of significance as it related to the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Hypothesis 2:

There was no significant relationship between all teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.

The Pearson r was applied to the data to test this hypothesis. The result was -.493 for the Black students, .189 for White students, .363 for Other students. There was no significant relationship between the teachers' perceptions of motivation, however, there was an inverse relationship as it related to the Black students. These results were not significant at the .05 level. This data revealed that teachers were less likely to refer black students to the gifted program based on the perceptions of motivation behavior. These findings, therefore, made the researcher accept Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3:

There was no significant relationship between all teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program.

This hypothesis was tested using *Pearson "r"* correlation coefficient and the result was .125 for the Black students; .369 for the White students; and .145 for the Other students within the gifted program. The variables of teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program were not significant at the .05 level of significance. Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

Hypothesis 4:

There was no significant difference in the relationship between all teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.

Hypothesis 4 was tested using ANOVA, the resulted probability was .980 for ethnicity, .767 for years of teaching experience, and .886 for job role. These probabilities indicated no significant relationship at the .05 level of significance. This revealed that teachers' perceptions of creative giftedness were not related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role. Hypothesis 4 was accepted. Neither regular nor gifted teachers revealed a relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role.

Hypothesis 5:

There was no significant difference in the relationship between all teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and job role.

The ANOVA probability results were .084 for ethnicity, .414 for years of teaching experience, and .312 for job role. The ANOVA test indicated no relationship between all the teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted programs in terms of (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role. These probabilities were not significant at the .05 level. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was accepted.

Hypothesis 6:

There was no significant difference in the relationship between all teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and job role.

The result of the ANOVA probability was .993 for ethnicity, .822 for years of teaching experience, and .084 for job role. It indicated no significant relationship at the .05 level of significance between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role. Hypothesis 6 in this case was accepted.

Hypothesis 7:

There was no significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school.

The *Pearson "r"* results were .578* for Black students, .901** for White students, and -.030 for Other students. There was a significant relationship beyond the .05 level and the .01 level between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school as it related to the Black and White students. The results indicated that White students had a greater relationship as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program regardless of their low ethnic composition of the DeKalb elementary schools. Other students had no significant relationship which indicated that their low composition of the school was equal to their low participation in the gifted program. However, Black students' ethnic composition in the gifted program was significant in relationship to their ethnic composition of the school population. There was

a significant relationship at the .05 level for the Black and White, therefore, this Hypothesis 7 was rejected. As for the Other students, Hypothesis 7 as accepted.

Conclusions

The significant findings in this research led to several meaningful conclusions. The conclusions were based on the demographic data of the sample within 12 DeKalb County schools.

The test for Hypothesis 1 revealed that there was no significant difference as it related to teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that teachers had a complete understanding of Renzulli's checklist of creativity that is used by the DeKalb County School System.

This study found that Hypothesis 2 revealed that there were no significant differences as it related to teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. This finding concluded that Black students had an inverse relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the teachers observed less motivation characteristics. Thus, black students' referrals to the gifted program were inverse, but not significant.

Hypothesis 3 revealed that there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. Based on these findings, it was concluded that teachers' perceptions of brightness characteristics were accurate as it related to Renzulli's checklist for giftedness. Thus,

teachers' knowledge of brightness had no misconstrued effect on minority students' placement in the gifted program.

The ANOVA test used in Hypothesis 4 revealed no significant difference in the relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role. Again, based on the ANOVA test, neither regular nor gifted teachers' perceptions of creativity had any effect on minority students' referrals to the gifted program.

Hypothesis 5 used ANOVA testing procedures. The test revealed no significant difference in the relationship between teachers' perceptions of motivation and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience; and (c) job role. Based on these findings, teachers' perceptions of motivation, knowledge of motivation characteristics, and usage of Renzulli's checklist for motivation were not influenced by their ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and job role as it related to regular and gifted teachers' referrals of minority students to the gifted program.

The ANOVA procedures were used in Hypothesis 6. The test revealed no significant difference in the relationship between teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program in terms of: (a) ethnicity, (b) years of teaching experience, and (c) job role. The findings concluded that regular and gifted teachers' perceptions of bright characteristics did not influence their referrals of minority students to the gifted program as it related to the teachers' ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and job role.

Hypothesis 7 used the test *Pearson "r"* correlation coefficient procedure. The test for Hypothesis 7 revealed a significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school as it related to Black and White students. However, there was no significant relationship as it related to Other students. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that teachers referred White students to the gifted program at a higher rate than they referred Black students, regardless of the schools' ethnic composition. Thus, the Renzulli's gifted characteristics checklist reflected teachers' perceptions of giftedness among White students at a higher rate than Black students. However, the Other students had an inverse relationship as it related to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school.

This finding supported the findings by Gordon (1996) and Gardner (1983) that gifted programs can no longer rely on traditional assessments and narrow definitions of giftedness. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of giftedness had no significant influence on their ability to identify potentially gifted minorities, particularly Blacks, whose racial or ethnic background differed from their own, as it related to referrals to the gifted program. The result of the data could have led one to accept the new multiple criteria for identifying multiple giftedness, which appeared to be working well.

Analysis of the data in terms of teachers' perceptions of creativity, motivation, and bright characteristics as it relates to the ethnic composition of the gifted program indicated that teachers had proper knowledge and training of Renzulli's checklist of motivation, creativity, and bright characteristics. The result of the data could lead one to conclude

that ethnic composition of the gifted program is not influenced by teachers' ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and their job role. However, this finding contradicts the relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school in regards to White students' larger composition in the gifted program but lower composition in DeKalb County's elementary schools.

This finding supports Hale-Benson's (1982) and Hilliard's (1976) study which reported that teachers' expectations of students vary based on the Black students' parents socio-economic, marital, and cultural status in addition to the status of the teachers' and parents' relationships. The reason for this contradiction is also in line with Ford's (1998) finding that teachers are not likely to reveal that they have different expectations for different students because of society's expectations of them and their professional oath of equality. Finally, Hale-Benson (1986) stated that the misconception of the problems that teachers experienced with Black students stemmed from a cultural mismatch between the teacher and child. Such mismatches, over a period of time, resulted in the White children having more of an opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities, receive more practice, and feel better about themselves.

Implications

The operation of gifted programs has been a growing concern for all ethnic parents and society. Much of the concern had been centered on biased tests, selected referrals, and deficit paradigms (used nationally). In cases where non-traditional assessments and

broader definitions of giftedness have conformed to the multiple intelligence of our diverse world, conflict still arose, as it related to the definition of giftedness and the mode instrument used to measure giftedness with regards to teachers' perceptions of giftedness for referrals. The teachers' role in referrals of potentially gifted minority students was clearly defined. However, one's values, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of the multicultural giftedness were questioned, in relation to teachers' expectations and perceptions of gifted minority students' creativity and motivation behavior.

The demographic characteristics of the sample group revealed that there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of creativity, motivation and brightness characteristics and the ethnic composition of the gifted program. However, teachers' perceptions of motivation and creativity giftedness indicated an inverse relationship, but not significant, as it related to Black students, in relation to the ethnic composition of the gifted program. This study revealed that those teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes of potentially gifted minority students were viewed differently as it related to Black students. However, teachers had knowledge of the gifted characteristics. In addition, the ethnic composition of the school revealed an equal balance of the ethnic composition of the gifted program as it related to the Black students. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school as it related to the Black and White students. The data revealed that DeKalb County elementary schools' students were predominantly Black (75%), but the ethnic composition of the gifted program has predominantly White students

(46%) in comparison to the Black students (43%). Therefore, as the schools' minority enrollment increased with Black students, teachers had inverse perceptions of motivation and creativity behavior. These inverse perceptions, due to the lack of research of gifted traits among the various ethnic groups, could have influence teachers' referrals of Black students in the gifted program. As for the Other students, the data revealed that the low ethnic composition of the gifted program was a reflection of the low ethnic composition of the Other student in the schools. In this case, the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programs could have been a "cultural mismatch" based on teachers' attitudes, values, and beliefs, since they were expected to identify and refer students with gifted characteristic (Ford, 1996).

The findings in this study revealed that teachers' perceptions of creativity and motivation giftedness and bright characteristics had no significant relationship to the ethnic composition of the gifted program. However, Ford (1996) and Frasier (1996) stated that underrepresentation of minorities in gifted programs was characterized by the ethnic group membership who had language differences or limitations, low socioeconomic status, and live in rural or inner-city areas. This finding supported the findings by Gordon (1996) and Gardner (1983) that gifted programs can no longer rely on traditional assessments and narrow definitions of giftedness. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of giftedness had no significant influence on their ability to identify potentially gifted minorities, particularly Blacks, whose racial or ethnic background differed from their own, as it related to referrals to the gifted program.

Therefore, teachers' knowledge of gifted characteristics was reliable as it relates to the ethnic composition of the gifted program and the ethnic composition of the school. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, values, and knowledge about minority students may create a barrier in the multicultural values and their way of life. However, parents, students, and the society would like to see a teaching staff and curriculum that is a reflection of the schools' ethnicity (Hilliard, 1986). In addition, it is necessary to have research on ethnic groups' gifted traits and a multicultural staff that was knowledgeable of the various degrees of giftedness, cultural values, and multiple intelligences, which could support and enrich each child's fullest potential for growth and development.

Thus, teachers should have current knowledge of various ethnic groups' gifted characteristics, which is incorporated in their training and education, in considering our ever-changing society. The definition of giftedness (creativity and motivation) should be well defined for teachers and parents, so that they may differentiate between bright characteristics and giftedness. All stakeholders were aware of the magnitude of this definition of giftedness, as it related to teachers' expectations of gifted behavior (particularly multicultural) and the importance of their perceptions for referrals.

However, most of the schools with large percentages of minorities and large socioeconomic (free and reduced lunches) status recipients revealed lower ethnic composition in the gifted program, which was evident in the schools with a high enrollment of minority students. Yet, the practices of referrals by teachers who had an inverse perception of creativity and motivation behavior could be harmful to Black

students who do not meet the teachers' expectations of giftedness for support and referral to the gifted program.

The research in this area clearly illustrated that more research on gifted traits non-traditional assessment must be used to encourage great public awareness and to improve the initiation of gifted programs' screening procedures of all ethnic groups. This procedure of identification of giftedness must be accompanied with continuous training. Furthermore, educational systems must include the concept of multiple intelligence and a gifted curriculum, which should be continuously incorporated in teachers' training, education, teaching methods, materials, and assessments (Ford, 1997; Frasier, 1996).

Finally, again, studies concluded by Hilliard (1986) and Ford (1995, 1996) revealed that teachers of different cultures had different expectations of students whose ethnicity was different from theirs. In addition, a recent study done by Frasier (1996) and Ford (1997) showed that the teachers' attitudes and misconceptions may very well mode the social and emotional climate in their classrooms. Here, this could very well be damaging to particular minority groups of children in the society. Clearly, students from various backgrounds/ethnic groups do not meet the standards set by narrow definitions of giftedness and traditional assessment for identifying giftedness. Thus, the students' achievement, motivation, intellectual growth, and placement in the gifted program may be significantly affected by the teachers' attitudes, values, and expectations regardless of their talents and gifted.

Recommendations Based on the Findings

The following recommendations are in order:

1. DeKalb School System should continue to provide clear details and communication to teachers and parents regarding gifted characteristics of school children. The research was, therefore, suggesting that school systems (with input from all stakeholders) generate a handbook of the characteristics of giftedness and how parents and teachers can identify and stimulate these traits as the society continues to grow and change.
2. DeKalb school system should share their success with other schools in providing other teachers with sets of guidelines of various ethnic groups' ways of life and cultural values.
3. DeKalb school system should continue to mandate yearly staff development courses on multiculturalism and exceptional student characteristics for all teachers, along with self-awareness instruction.
4. School systems should vigorously recruit teachers of different ethnic backgrounds to ensure that the faculty, staff, and students are representative of all ethnic groups in the school community.
5. It is recommended that continuous research must be done between teachers' perceptions of giftedness and referrals of minority students to gifted programs through the teaching and learning process of the multiple intelligences within the classroom to ensure equality.

6. Research on the wide ranges of giftedness among the various ethnic groups way of life, values, and belief could help broaden the definition of giftedness and expand the research needed in developing identification instruments which would be more sensitive to all ethnic groups and unidentified gifted traits. In addition, school systems may want to provide an extensive multicultural curriculum and staff, teaching technique, and gifted assessment instruments, which would allow our society's wide cultures gifts to surface.

Appendices

research
DEPARTMENT
DeKalb County School System

to: Cooperating Principals

from: Dr. Ganga Persaud

subject: Approval of Cynthia Allen's Proposal to Collect Data in DeKalb County School System

date: July 13, 1999

The Department of Research and Evaluation has approved Cynthia Allen's proposal to administer a questionnaire on *Teacher's Perceptions About the Gifted Program*. The data are intended for the Doctorate Degree in Education at Clark Atlanta University. Ms Allen is also a teacher with our school system.

Your cooperation in facilitating this student will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

dj

MEMO

TO: ILTs

FROM: Cynthia Allen

RE: Survey of Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness

DATE: 8-10-99

Four participants from each grade level (K – 6) and the gifted teacher(s) are needed to complete this study. I am asking the ILTs to collect all the surveys. One week later I will pickup the surveys.

Thanks!!

MEMO

TO: GIFTED TEACHERS

FROM: CYNTHIA ALLEN, BOUIE ELEMENTARY

SUBJECT: A QUESTIONAIRE ON TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF GIFTEDNESS AND A COPY OF YOUR GRADE LEVEL DATA COLLECTION FOR GIFTED (1998-1999).

DATE: 8-16-99

Dear Gifted Teacher,

The Department of Research and Evaluation has approved my proposal to administer a questionaire on Teacher's Perceptions About the Gifted Program. The data are intended for the Doctorate Degree in Education at Clark Atanta Unversity. In addition, may I have copies of last year's Grade Level Data Collection For Gifted (one sheet from each grade level, 1999). Please return the information in the courier to me at Bouie Elementary.

Thank you,

Cynthia Allen

The purpose of this survey is to solicit your opinion about gifted characteristics. Please, be frank as possible. You cannot be identified in any way. To ensure anonymity, an envelope will be provided per grade level which is to be given to the ILT.

Choose one response from the scale below that best describes a gifted student's characteristics.

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Agree 4=Strongly Agree

1. Responsible and follows through with given instruction.	1	2.	3	4
2. Is very alert.	1	2	3	4
3. Organizes and prioritizes activities.	1	2	3	4
4. Has a good memory.	1	2	3	4
5. Likes school and absorbs information.	1	2	3	4
6. Is concerned with the appropriate right and/or wrong; often evaluates and judges others, events, and things.	1	2	3	4
7. Is self assertive and firm in one's beliefs as it relates to activities.	1	2	3	4
8. Shows emotional sensitivity.	1	2	3	4
9. Elaborates and is stimulated by ideas and/or information from others.	1	2	3	4
10. Critiques constructively, unwilling to accept authorization pronouncements.	1	2	3	4
11. Has a keen sense of humor in situations, which may not appear humorous to others.	1	2	3	4
12. Fantasizes and manipulates ideas with an intellectual playfulness; able to improve and modify products.	1	2	3	4
13. Independent, adventurous, and a high risk taker.	1	2	3	4
14. Generates unique and creative ideas, solutions and questions on various topics.	1	2	3	4
15. Is radical and uninhibited in expressing his/her opinion.	1	2	3	4
16. Keen, observant, sensitive to beauty, and sees the unusual.	1	2	3	4
17. Very crafty about many things; constantly asking questions.	1	2	3	4
18. Accepts disorder, lacks interest in detail, fearless of individuality.	1	2	3	4

19. Prefers to work alone.	1	2	3	4
20. Needs little motivation to get excited.	1	2	3	4
21. Strives for perfection; self critical, hard to please self.	1	2	3	4
22. Persistent in the completion of tasks.	1	2	3	4
23. Becomes absorbed only in topics that interest him/her; difficult to get him/her to move to other topics.	1	2	3	4
24. Knows the answers to most questions.	1	2	3	4
25. Has good ideas.	1	2	3	4
26. Is a hard worker.	1	2	3	4
27. Listens with interest.	1	2	3	4
28. Learns with ease.	1	2	3	4
29. Understands ideas easily.	1	2	3	4
30. Is receptive to information.	1	2	3	4
31. Completes assignments.	1	2	3	4
32. Is in the top group in subject matters.	1	2	3	4
33. Grasps concept(s) easily.	1	2	3	4
34. Likes one's peers.	1	2	3	4
35. Enjoys straightforwardness.	1	2	3	4
36. Copies assignments accurately.	1	2	3	4
37. Is pleased with own learning.	1	2	3	4
38. Able to sequence information.	1	2	3	4
39. After 6-8 repetitions, masters information.	1	2	3	4

Please circle one of the following questions appropriately:

40. Gender: 1=Male 2=Female

41. Teacher's Ethnicity:
    1=White 2-Black 3=Asian American 4=Hispanic 5=Native American 6=Other

42. Job Role:
    1=Regular Teacher 2=Gifted Teacher -

43. Years of teaching experience:
    1=Less than 1 yr. 2=1-5 3=6-10 4=11-15 5=11-15 6=21+

44. Your assigned grade level:
    K 1 2 3 4 5 6

45. Have you taken courses and/or received inservices in the following categories:
    1. Multicultural/Bilingual
    2. Staff Development Gifted Courses
    3. Inservices On Identifying Gifted
    4. None

STUDENT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Name_____ Date_____ Grade_____ School_____

Teacher_____ Parent_____

DIRECTIONS: Add numbers in each column for *Column Total*, add column totals together for *Final Score*.

KEY:	1 = Almost Never	2 = Sometimes	3 = Often	4 = Consistently

CREATIVITY CHARACTERISTICS: (Circle the number for each statement that best describes the student).

1	2	3	4	(1) Is uninhibited in expressions of opinion; is sometimes radical and spirited in disagreement; is tenacious.
1	2	3	4	(2) Displays a great deal of curiosity about many things; is constantly asking questions about anything and everything.
1	2	3	4	(3) Is sensitive to beauty; attends to aesthetic characteristics of things; keen observer, sees the unusual.
1	2	3	4	(4) Nonconforming; accepts disorder; is not interested in details; is individualistic; does not fear being different.
1	2	3	4	(5) Generates a large number of ideas or solutions to problems and questions; often offers unusual unique, clever responses.
1	2	3	4	(6) Is a high risk taker; is adventurous and speculative; shows greater than usual amount of independence.
1	2	3	4	(7) Displays a good deal of intellectual playfulness; fantasizes; and manipulates ideas. Adapts, improves and modifies products.
1	2	3	4	(8) Displays a keen sense of humor in situations that may not appear to be humorous to others.
1	2	3	4	(9) Criticizes constructively; is unwilling to accept authoritarian pronouncements without critical examination.
1	2	3	4	(10)Adapts readily to new situations; flexible in thought and actions and does not seem disturbed when the normal routine is changed.
1	2	3	4	(11)Elaborates on ideas from others/uses them as a jumping off point as opposed to copying them.
1	2	3	4	(12)Shows emotional sensitivity.
—	—	—	—	*COLUMN TOTALS*
				FINAL SCORE

STUDENT OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Name_____ Date_____ Grade___ School_____

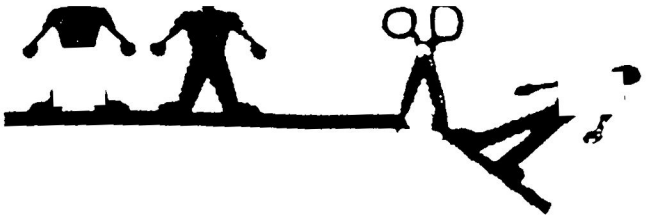
Teacher_____ Parent_____

DIRECTIONS: Add numbers in each column for *Column Total*, add column totals together for *Final Score*.

KEY: 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Consistently

MOTIVATION CHARACTERISTICS: (Circle the number for each statement that best describes the student.)

1	2	3	4	(1) Becomes absorbed and truly involved in certain topics or problems; is persistent in seeking task completion. (It is sometimes difficult to get him/her to move on to another topic.)
1	2	3	4	(2) Prefers to work independently; requires little directions from teachers.
1	2	3	4	(3) Needs little external motivation to follow through in work that initially excites him/her.
1	2	3	4	(4) Strives toward perfection; is self critical; is not easily satisfied with his/her own speed or products.
1	2	3	4	(5) Likes to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations.
1	2	3	4	(6) Often is self assertive (often tenacious); stubborn in his/her beliefs; generally directs the activity in which he/she is involved.
1	2	3	4	(7) Is quite concerned with right and wrong, good and bad; often evaluates and passes judgment on events, people, and things.
1	2	3	4	(8) Establishes priorities when organizing activities.
1	2	3	4	(9) Carries responsibility well; can be counted on to do what he/she has promised and ususally does it well.
1	2	3	4	(10)Reads a great deal on his/her own.
___	___	___	___	*COLUMN TOTALS*
			____	*FINAL SCORE*



BRIGHT CHILD

Knows the answers.
Is interested.
Is attentive.

Has good ideas.
Works hard.
Answers the questions.

Top group.
Listens with interest.
Learns with ease.
6-8 repetitions for mastery.
Understands ideas.
Enjoys peers.
Grasps the meaning.
Completes assignments.
Is receptive.
Copies accurately.
Enjoys school.
Absorbs information.
Technician.
Good memorizer.
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation.
Is alert.
Is pleased with own learning.

GIFTED LEARNER

Asks the questions.
Is highly curious.
Is mentally and physically involved.
Has wild, silly ideas.
Plays around, yet tests well.
Discusses in detail, elaborates.
Beyond the group.
Show strong feelings and opinions.
Already knows.
1-2 repetitions for mastery.
Constructs abstractions.
Prefers adults.
Draws inferences.
Initiates projects.
Is intense.
Creates a new design.
Enjoys learning.
Manipulates information.
Inventor.
Good guesser.
Thrives on complexity.

Is keenly observant.
Is highly self-critical.

By Janice Szabos

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